



## Improving Arthritis-Related Quality of Life Among Farmers

### Public Health Problem

Arthritis or chronic joint symptoms affect almost 70 million Americans—nearly one of every three adults, making it among the most common health problems in the United States. Arthritis is the most frequent cause of disability in America; more than 7 million citizens are limited in some way because of arthritis. There is substantial evidence that farmers and those involved in farm-related activities are at increased risk for hip and knee osteoarthritis. Approximately 1.5 million people in Missouri have arthritis, which represents 37% of the adult population in the state.

### Evidence That Prevention Works

Research has shown that the pain and disability associated with arthritis can be minimized through the use of appropriate self-management behaviors and techniques. Particular modifiable behaviors include activities that require kneeling, squatting, and lifting heavy objects.

### Program Example

The Missouri Arthritis & Osteoporosis Program (MAOP) partnered with the Missouri Arthritis Rehabilitation Research and Training Center to promote and support efforts of the University of Missouri Agricultural Engineering Extension Project that targets farmers in their state. The AgrAbility Project engages extension specialists, disability experts, rural professionals, and volunteers, including MAOP staff. This partnership organizes and assists farmers in remaining active despite disabilities related to their arthritis. This assistance includes giving instruction in the appropriate way to enter and exit a tractor in order to minimize pain, distributing arthritis-related information, providing adaptive devices and technology, and demonstrating techniques to help improve the farmers' quality of life. The project is designed to help an estimated 30,000 of Missouri's 136,000 farmers, ranchers, and agricultural workers who have a disease, disorder, or disability that limits their ability to perform some work-related or daily-living tasks.

### Implications

Agriculture is one of Missouri's largest and most diverse sources of revenue. Developing programs that will improve the work-related quality of life for this segment of the population will reduce the number of people who experience limitations because of arthritis. In addition, these programs could serve as a model for other states with large agricultural populations.